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## JAPANESE HANGING PANELS.

THE painted Japanese slats or panels which have lately appeared in the art market, are among the best examples I have seen of the slight, quick-fingered decoration of flat surface work, of a people who perhaps excel all others in the perfect understanding of most of the conditions that govern minor art. Indeed, it would seem as if we of the Western civilization can only appreciate as observers, however much we may try to emulate as designers, that

subtle perception—given any small flat surface to be decorated and any motive as decoration—of the right spot to be filled and the right space to be left untouched, which seems to be second nature with the Japanese art workman. As these beautiful strips of form and color have been imported here in very small quantities and are but little known, it may be worth while to give them a few words of description, and try to yield at least a suggestion of their impromptu loveliness. I have drawn the two here shown from a couple which have long been a source of enjoyment to me, as they have hung one on each side of my desk. Both are about four and a half feet long and five and a half inches wide, and being cut out of very light and thoroughly seasoned wood not more than a quarter of an inch thick, their feather-weight and portable shape constitute them the very "passe-partouts" of house decoration, and what with the growth in our community of a large class of people of refined tastes and small means, and of apartment-houses in the city and "genteel shanties" in the country to suit it, the day is not very distant when a supply of distinctively portable and low-priced yet artistic furniture and decoration will be a great desideratum in our market.

One of the slats, as indicated in our illustration, is in four pieces, so deftly put together that the joints would not be perceptible were not the woods all different in grain and color, somewhat resembling, though also quite different from our black oak, black-walnut, brown ash, and yellow pine. Two flowers fill the foot of the panel, the petals of one being pink and white, of the other a deep scarlet, and both having stamens of yellow ochre. The rest of the decoration shows the branch of a tree with its green leaves



and white blossoms—their yellow stamens rising from a purple centre which runs upward in dim stains and vivid veining of the same hue, that blend tenderly into the white edges of the delicate petals. The other slat is in a single piece of spongy wood, its back showing it to be of a light buff tint with streaks of primrose yellow, but its face prepared for painting with a varnish of somewhat darker tint. The lowest figure shows pink and purple petals among its leaves, and is evidently a faithful rendering of the characteristics in form and color of some kind of wild, soft-stemmed flowers. But

the coloring, if not the form, of the upper figure—except as relates to the hard wood branches—is evidently a mere caprice. At least there is in the original, though our illustration, being denied color, shows leaves and flowers of varying form, no difference whatever between the star-shaped figures representing both, except that the former are of the inevitable green, and the latter of the brightest scarlet. The little bird flying between the sprays is most charmingly rendered with abundant precision, and yet with floatings and strokes—broad, delicate, or medium, as the case may be—so few that though the feathering effect is all that can be desired in such an "esquisse," they may be readily counted. The head is ultramarine blue, the throat and breast purple and indigo, the belly salmon-color, the tail Prussian blue and white, while in the under wing the violet ridge above each quill melts softly into the downy white between. A ring of white encircles the neck, and one of green the eye, which, like the beak, is black. To heighten the effect of the whole panel with a little glitter, and as if to mark the junction of decorative with pictorial art, a pinch of gold-dust has been thrown here and there on the surface of each; but by what agglutinative process it remains in its place does not appear.



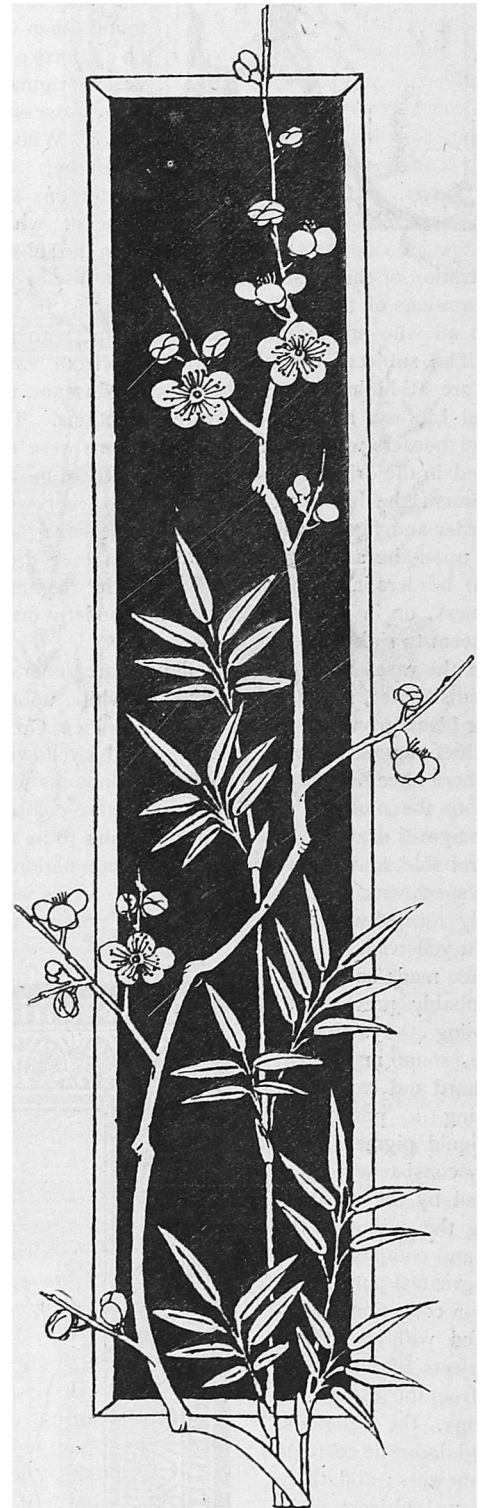
Both drawing and coloring (with the apparent exception just noted) are purely naturalistic, evidently taken by the artist from a newly-plucked posy, or from a tree-branch waving above his head, and done with a free hand in the most literal sense; for it is said that one art-workman, with several brushes between the fingers of each hand, will rattle off quite a number of them in a day. That these paintings—they are done in body color—are the work of very few strokes is evident to the expert, as it is also, however, that the artists have had no limitations of any consequence to contend against unless in the porousness of some of the wood surface used, making the water-color on the edge of the figures run a little in the direction of the grain where the lines have fallen on a soft spot. But as the boundary lines of the surface to be decorated are ignored—as the difficult questions of foreground and background and aerial perspective are not in order—as no conventionalities of geometrical form or symmetrical iteration interfere with the freest impromptu treatment—as the vegetation that mainly serves for copy may obviously be accepted either for portraits to be rendered as closely as may suit the workman of little imagination, or for the merest suggestions to the convenience and caprice of the creative instinct—such productions, though extremely satisfactory in their way, and possessing, in some respects and for certain purposes, a superiority to the most elaborate and costly conventional decoration, can, as pictorial art, be assigned no higher rank than that given to the vegetation they represent in comparison with the splendid displays of the conservatory. But that is just why, in temporary quarters, it takes rank as pictorial art, though it would not, in a city drawing-room. There are many situations where these charming panels may be used to the best advantage, of which I may speak hereafter.

A. J. BLOOR.

## OUR PLAQUE, TILES, AND SCREEN.

THE design for a plaque given in our supplement this month is by Professor Camille Piton, with whose work the readers of this magazine are already familiar. The ground may be painted in Chinese yellow or Celestial blue, the color being laid on very lightly. The sun should be gold, or yellow ochre, smoothened with a "putois." For the figure of Apollo, use a gray tint composed of warm gray, ("gris roux"), and gray Nos. 1 and 2, mixed with yellow ochre and brown bitume for the shading. The god has light hair, for which ivory yellow and brown bitume should be used. The outlines must be black and strongly defined.

There is little to say about the tile designs. The charming simplicity of the very slightly conventionalized forms of the flowers commend them for a variety of decorative purposes. An artistic wall-paper designer will find in them some useful hints, while the absence



in them of the fault of what is called "up and down" treatment—indeed their entire freedom from all objections on the score of formality—and the favorable opportunity they afford for the employment of some of the most delicate of the tertiary colors, suggest that they might be no less valuable in their suggestiveness to the carpet designer. For tile decoration, the flowers should be white (the natural color of the china) tinted with carnation, and the leaves should be dark-green shaded with yellow and brown. The background may be sage-green. The flower represented is the Japanese plum-blossom ("umé"). Perhaps it would be best to leave the coloring of the screen to the taste of the amateur. The butterflies and the bright-plumed bird will supply all the color that is necessary to relieve the effect of the dark-hued foliage. The foliage at the bottom of the picture is admirably suggestive of possible height.